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ABSTRACT

Educational policy research is discussed as it concerns the utilization and programming of research. Following a brief review of the development of the educational research system, Part 1 discusses the following utilization concerns: the gap between research and policymakers; the relationship of organizational setting to utilization (comparing instrumental and conceptual use of information); the use of scientific knowledge and the policy-making work flow; and limitations to utilization. Part 2 describes research utilization and programming in the Netherlands: the national Institute for Educational Research (SVO) and the Dutch educational support structure; a short history of educational research programming; SVO's research programs for educational policy and practice; and programming steps (inventory of research needs, problem survey, development of SVO research program documents, research contracting, and execution and monitoring). Part 3 identifies several dilemmas and concerns, including: improvement of certain research skills; the relationship of policy research to the characteristics of the organization that will use the outcomes; and the need for international cooperation and exchange. Contains 9 references. (KM)

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UTILIZATION AND RESEARCH PROGRAMMING: MAJOR CONCERNS OF EDUCATIONAL POLICY ORIENTED RESEARCH FOR THE 80's

by

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UTILIZATION AND RESEARCH PROGRAMMING:

MAJOR CONCERNS OF EDUCATIONAL POLICY ORIENTED RESEARCH FOR THE 80's

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INTRODUCTION

By accepting the difficult task of identifying the major issues of concern of educational research, I am aware that I have been invited, really, to look ahead to future prospects. And this, in my opinion, can best be done by analysing the current assumptions about the nature and functions of research for education. I stress the "for" here. As the director of the Netherlands' central agency for educational research (SVO), I feel that the preposition "for" leads us to the heart of the matter in policy and practice oriented research in our domain.

GROWTH AND GRIP

Looking back, we have to realize that prior to the sixties most educational researchers acted as independent scholars. Until then there was little money. Then, since the mid-sixties, governments in most Western countries have been more generous. They have increasingly looked to the social sciences for support in articulating, implementing and (to a lesser degree) evaluating policies in many areas. This was the case for education in particular. As the volume of policy oriented research mounted, however, so did expectations and -- in the seventies -- feelings of unease about its rationale. In the early eighties, when new technologies and their concommitant changes in Western economies and social systems made their presence felt, governments were confronted with the fact that educational provisions (including research and other infrastructures) have become more complex, more extensive, and more expensive. Faced with the obvious inadequacy of the existing educational systems to deal with the rapidly changing circumstances of our time, politicians and administrators try to get a firmer grip on education as a whole, and on its infrastructural provisions in particular. It is generally felt that there is a growing trend of increasing centralization and control[1)] of research by the central governments in most member-states of the Council of Europe.
It is my hope and believe that this trend can be countrered before the grip turns into an enstranglement. In the reaminder of this contribution I will deal in length with what is -- or should -- be our major concern: the utilization problem, and I will try to analyse some of the new strategies which are needed if educational research is to reduce its vulnerability to the mentioned trend of centralization and then counter the one-sided tailoring of research still more closely to the needs of policy-makers and administrators who commission the research projects. This we will do under the headings of utilization and research programming -- the latter being the crucial strategy for improvement of research utilization.

Acknowledgement: Thanks are due to Drs. Gerard B. Kosse for his substantial contribution to this document.

PART ONE: UTILIZATION MATTERS

Gap between research and policy-makers

Concern over the gap between research and policy-making has increased sharply over the last decade. This same observation has already been made in 1981, when SVO, under the auspices of the Council of Europe, organized an international Workshop te re-examine the interplay of social science and policy-making. The editors of the Workshop's Proceedings[2] state that the increasing demand for a clear demonstration of the value of social science research, for evidence of visible and practical return from national investment, called for such a re-examination. Essential for my exposé is what they say about the views of the various groups involved:

> "Practitioners complain of the isolation of researchers and recommend improving communication on both sides, together with better dissemination and implementation efforts. Governments, on the other hand, propose a close customer-contractor relationship as a solution, implying both active initiation of research by the authorities on problems of their own choosing, and more direct control. Researchers themselves, expecially those involved in "research on research" and writers on the philosophy of science, locate solutions in greater insight into the proper function and nature of research and its social context." (p 4)

The solution to the problem of a gap between researchers and policy-makers and practitioners has been sought in "better dissemination". The problems tackled were those of intelligibility, distribution and retrievalbility. But these solutions have been conceived in terms of a simplistic, linear model: research question, research, publication, dissemination and utilization. Numerous studies on utilization of research knowledge[3] have challenged this simplistic model with quite fundamental consequences for the implementation of strategies which would bridge the gap between the parties concerned, including the establishment of new intermediary institutions like research advisory bodies, new roles, networks, technologies and varying modes of presenting the same research data to varying target groups in policy and practice. In the words of Eric Hoyle:[4] "A number of very different approaches to an understanding of the nature of knowledge and its transmission have undermined earlier simplistic notions of a rational sequence whereby the product of educational research is transmitted as a neutral body of knowledge via impersonal modes of communication to passively-accepting practitioners who will apply it in undiluted form to their practical problems. Whatever the ultimate degree of 'objectivity' which research data might have, there is little doubt that it will be interpreted, negotiated and transformed by the social systems through which it is diffused."

Caplan (1975, 1982), Weiss (1971) and many authors after them stressed the importance of the view that the utilization of (scientific) knowledge should be conceived in terms of a proces. The throughput (besides input and output) is essential in such a view: Information flows through an organization. "It may have multiple, not single effects; it may be used and re-used; and most important, its substance or 'message' may actually be changed or converted as it is used and re-used" (Caplan, 1981, p 17, cited in Kosse, 1981 p 13). As Kosse summarized a major conclusion of the SVO Workshop mentioned before: Once attention is given to the throughput

stage, the focus of our attention has shifted away from the customary (dissemination) variables to aspects of the organization using or requiring research information. The essential impact of research on policy-making is then seen to be in its capacity to redefine policy and practice problems and attention is given to the organizational variables which determine what is permitted to be investigated and the willingness and ability of administrators and other users to modify views in the light of research evidence, and to incorporate this information in their policy and action strategies.

Utilization and organizational setting

Efforts at interpreting the use of research knowledge in educational policy formation have increased tremendously since the concepts of 'dissemination' and 'adoption' of innovative practices have been borrowed from studies of agricultural development. But, as Timpane (1982) puts it in his overview of the American Federal Policy for dissemination of educational R&D in the seventies and early eighties, research planning and policy-making have only begun to consider systematically the implication that requirements of effective dissemination should have upon the identification, design and conduct of research. SVO's attempt in this context will be dealt with further down. Here, we first present the major insights and findings related to the organization characteristics when focussing on research utilization matters.

Whatever classificiation scheme[6] is used to distinguish between various domains of educational knowledge production, it is apparent to all parties concerned that different types of research products are utilized (if at all) in quite different settings and for different purposes. Caplan, Weiss and many other authors in the socalled Utilization Movement[7] stress the relationships between characteristics of the policy or practice organization and the way research knowledge is used. Usually three major interacting factors or characteristics of the organization are reported:

- the nature of the problem dealt with by the organization,
- the type of information (note 6) involved, and
- the position of the end-user in the organizational hierarchy.

Differences along these three dimensions result in what Caplan termed instrumental and conceptual use of information. Weiss illustrated that the main function of the latter type of use is enlightenment. In the context of political decision-making generalizations and ideas from many studies come into currency in this indirect way. The scheme shown on the next page has been taken from a report on the SVO Workshop mentioned before.

Caplan's studies (1975) made clear that characteristics of instrumental utilization pertain to middle-level officials in particular. Researchers and agencies like SVO apparently do not realise this sufficiently in their research planning and dissemination efforts. Caplan found that most often the primary purpose of such instrummental knowledge application was to test the acceptability of established programmes and policies, or to measure progress or retrogression with respect to the success of such efforts. The decisions to be taken have a narrow scope, and are often taken on empirically based knowledge ('hard' knowledge,

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INSTRUMENTAL AND CONCEPTUAL UTILIZATION COMPARED

CRITERIA /ORGANIZ.	INSTRUMENTAL UTILIZATION	CONCEPTUAL UTILIZATION
1. Nature of the problem	Micro-level problems: day-to-day policy issues of limited significance, usually involving either small segments of the population or the user's own organization (bureaucratic management and efficiency)	Macro-level problems: policy matters which affect the nation as a whole; policy matters that have social consequences
2. Type of information involved	Application oriented empirical findings; routine, data-based knowledge; 'hard' knowledge	Diverse sources of social science information: (newspapers, books, television, professional journals, magazines, radio): hard and soft information
3. Position of end-user in the organizational hierarchy	Middle levels of the bureaucracy	Upper-level governmental officials
a. Source of information	In-house: user's agency's staff	Diverse sources, external to the government
b. Utilization depends primarily on:	Properties of the bureaucracy	Properties of the individual user
c. Perspective of user	Reliance on empirically grounded information alone: data-based	Appraisal of scientific (hard) and extra scientific (soft) knowledge from a variety of sources: conceptual based knowledge
d. Most relied upon kind of information	In-house produced hard knowledge, provided through routine channels	More general forms of social science knowledge are important far more often than specialized scientific premised (hard) knowledge typically provided through routine channels; not in-house provided
e. Frequencies	Approximately 90% of reported uses of social science research were associated with micro-problems (of which about 30-50% involved bureaucratic management and efficiency)	Approximately 10% of the instances of reported cases of knowledge application involve macro-level problems
f. Appropriateness of information transfer procedures	Most procedures based on gap-filling theories are best suited for policy decisions involving instrumental application. Here they appear to function adequately	Most existing procedures are inappropriate here. Collaboration at this level must be concentrated upon dealing with issues which involve more general problems, the formulation of the problem, assisting in knowing what he or she has to know, and understanding of which aspects of the problem are to be decided on data-based knowledge and which ones on the basis of non-research knowledge

Based on: Nathan Caplan, Social Research and Public Policy at the National Level, 1981
and discussions during the SVO Workshop Educational Research and Public Policy Making, The Hague, May 1981

Note: the first three criteria discriminate between instrumental and conceptual utilization. The other characteristics are related to these three.

SOURCE: Fosse, Gerard R.Fosse: Knowledge Utilization and Public Policy [illegible] (paper 1981)

data). Although both Caplan and Weiss agreed that the linear model of dissemination remains the only practicable means of disseminating most research data, several alternative models have recently emerged. They involve the creation of situations in which both researchers and their "customers" (policy-makers and practitioners) are active partners and in which the meaning of research findings is discussed and negotiated. In the Netherlands, moreover, special attention is given to such interactions between contractors and customers in the phase that policy problems have to be defined and concomitant research needs have to be identified. See Part Two.
A special problem, vaguely felt, but gaining momentum in research circles is the abundance of research reports produced. In the Netherlands annually more than 80 major research projects present their findings to SVO and its customers in policy and practice alone. The need for state-of-the-art reviews that systematize and synthesize available knowledge on a particular policy or practice issue, preferably within a theoretical framework, is increasingly felt.

Conceptual utilisation of research knowledge occurs when decisions have to be made which involve important policy matters which affect large segments of the nation (in our context: the educational system) as a whole. Caplan made clear that senior executives dealing with these kinds of issues only rarely rely on concrete, point-by-point empirically based information alone. Such research knowledge is usually only one of the many sources used. Scientific and extra-scientific knowledge are "combined conceptually, resulting in a judgement or a perspective which is then applied broadly to decisions involving problems at the macro-level range" (Caplan, 1981). For issues of great consequence policy makers appear to be eclectic in their use of information sources, predominantly external to government, such as newspapers, books, professional journals, magazines, television and radio. The importance of informal sources of information and personal contacts has been observed by several authors dealing with utilization issues. However, linkage at this conceptual level is a problem hardly dealt with by research agencies responsible for the planning and dissemination of educational research. This negligence cannot be excused. The more so, since these high ranking officials and politicians have such a strong influence on funding of the educational research industry itself. They are the ones who try to get a firmer grip on it and who are the exponents of the trend of centralization and control.
Having concentrated on a more detailed description of "utilization" sofar, it seems necessary to shift the focus of our attention to the user of research information. To some extent we already did this when a link was made between the position of the end-user in the organizational hierarchy and the two types of use discussed.

Use of scientific knowledge and the policy-making work flow

In contrast to earlier days in 1987 not many adherents of the assumption that policy making is a decisionmaking process of the kind that is best described by the rational model, can be found anymore.
The incremental and fragmented nature of decision making in politics policy making is dealt with extensively by Carol Weiss. In her paper for the SVO Workshop mentioned before she elaborates on eight so called

"undirected strategies" in which a policy can come into being. I will just list them here since the illustrates in a different way why much research knowledge does not seem to be used or cannot be used in the policy making process:

1. Reliance on custom and implicit rules: even if a situation is unprecedented.
2. Improvisation: through impromptu accomodation, an agency may begin to fashion new policy.
3. Mutual adjustment: office holders may reach decisions by simply adapting to decisions made around them.
4. Accretion: precedented responses are repeated if they seem to work; over time these responses grow in size by gradual addition, fusion or inclusion.
5. Negotiation: When authority is fragmented and agencies have overlapping and discrepant mandates, overt conflicts may arise. Many are settled by direct negotiation among the interested units. The aim is less to reach a rational decision in the usual sense than to satisfy the key interests of the parties.
6. Move and counter-move: If bargaining breaks down, and agency may take a unilateral move to advance its position, followed by counter moves of other affected agencies.
7. A window for solutions: Officials become wedded to pet remedies and they seek opportunities to implement these.
8. Indirection: Policy emerges as an unintended by-product of other decisions.

Despite their substantial differences the strategies listed above share what Mitchell (1985) calls the (educational) policy-making work flow. By this he means that policy-making takes time, and that policy decisions pass through several stages between their initial identification or appearance and their ultimate implementation and evaluation. For the purpose of a better understanding of SVO's research programming activities in Part Two of this contribution, the stages he and others discriminate in legislative policy formation and at state, local and school level alike, are listed here: (Mitchell, 1985, p 33):

1. initial articulation of policy interests or demands;
2. later stages involve deliberation, modification and aggregation of support for various proposals (handled by legislative policy committees);
3. priority setting and allocation of resources to particular policies (handled by fiscal committees);
4. follow-up oversight of policy implementation (typically handled through legislative staff studies of interim committee hearings).

Although typically oriented to the anglo-saxon situation, the above mentioned stages can easily be recognised in other settings. There seems to be one difference, however, between the USA and Europe-at-large when the role evaluation data is considered. In European countries, scientific evaluation does not play the same dominant role as this seems the case in the USA. Mitchell notes that studies of utilization clearly indicate that "scientific research and evaluation data" serve very different functions at each of the various stages. According to Mitchell science serves to define problems and turn desires into concrete proposals for action, at the earliest stages. But, "The role of research and evaluation data in this process has only recently been identified .... but is not yet fully

understood", he remarks. We will see in the second part of this contribution that this clearly pictures SVO's problem in its research program formation processes. Because of its relevance for policy oriented research organizations and their efforts to improve interrelations with their customers, I fully quote Mitchell when dealing with the role of research in the other stages: During later stages science utilization is more obvious, but it is also more controversial. During the sifting, amending and support aggregation process of stage two, science is used to assess policy proposals - and it can play a powerful role in killing proposals that would otherwise have substantial political support. For this reason, science utilization becomes increasingly politicized as decisions move toward the stage at which resources must be committed to their implementation. (...) Intellectually, science provides problem definition, proposal evaluation and assessment of the probability that policies are (or would be) effective in producing specific outcomes at an acceptable cost. Socially, science plays an equally important - and often unrecognized - role in mobilizing (or demoralizing) policy support for various policy proposals." (p 34) It should be noted, however, that Mitchell's description of the role of scientific research obviously takes it for granted that there is a strong, institutionalized and independent research capacity and body of knowledge present. As far as educational policy research is concerned, this is not the case in many european countries.

Some limitations

The literature on utilization of scientific knowledge abounds with descriptions of research characteristics which limit its potential use in policy-making. Roughly they can be divided into two categories:

1) factors inherent to the research process (planning, execution, organization)
2) characteristics of the outcome of research: the knowledge produced.

As far as the research process is concerned, attention is given to:

- Time span: Research often takes a long time, Policy issues cannot always wait that long. As a result, several outcomes are not relevant anymore for the policymaker. They seem outdated.
- Finance: If there is no (preferrably: national) agency in existence which has the well-defined mission to support policy-making in its different stages with research, the potential contribution of research will be neglected. Budgets will not be made available.
- Independence: Too often policy-makers consider it their prerogative to define the research problem alone. They take the customer-contractor relation too literally, being unaware of the different functions of research, its limitations and theoretical base.
- Ownership: Policy-research in education is usually financed by public funds. As a consequence the results sould be made public and cannot be claimed by the customer alone.
- Communication: The "two cultures" (see Snow, 1959, and Husén and Kogan, 1984) involved (research and policy) with their different time frames and different levels of need for certainty in their conclusions do not understand each other sufficiently.

With regard to the second group of limitations, the literature focuses on methodological issues. The following criticisms are well-known:

- Distortion: Researchers study things they know, not necessarily what their customers would like them to study.
- Theoretical issues: Researchers reconceptualize the policy problems in such a way that they fit their theoretical paradigma and, by doing so, do not necessarily examine the policy problems put forward by their clients.
  Moreover, researchers are charged with over-simplification of problems in order to accommodate their research methods.
- Scope problems: For practical economic reasons research is time- and circumstance bound. Therefore they can miss entirely the causal variables needed for general conclusions. Comparative and longitudinal studies are relatively scarce, although these overcome this constraint to a great extent.
- Problem solving capacity: Customers too often expect research to solve problems, This is hardly, if ever, the case.
- Certainty: Research often cannot provide clear-cut answers. Findings are complex, and often phrased in probabilistic terms.

Finally, it should be noted that the national "climate" in terms of willingness to cooperate and use empirically based information is a factor whose influence should not be underestimated when dealing with utilization of research knowledge. The literature is remarkably silent in this matter, despite the fact that this general attitude to the empirical sciences seems to determine to what extent independent policy research organizations will be established and maintained.

PART TWO: RESEARCH UTILIZATION AND PROGRAMMING: THE DUTCH CASE

Introduction

In order to optimalize the utilization of research for policy and practice, the national Institute for Educational Research in the Netherlands (SVO, after its former Dutch initials) has tried to develop a series of mechanisms which would realize this aim. Sofar, most attention has been paid to the first stage in commissioned research: to the indentification of correct and relevant policy- and practice problems where research could play a certain role. The work undertaken in this context is called "research programming". Further down we will see that this broad term encompasses research contracting, monitoring and -- to some extent -- research dissemination as well.

First we linger a while at SVO as a national research council and research funding (contracting) agency and SVO's position in the educational support structure in the Netherlands. Then we will try to capture the essence of research programming as this is understood in our country. Thirdly, we will summarize the daily routines and steps undertaken in the research programme formation and its execution. This case material will help us to deal with the dilemmas and concerns which are discussed in the last part of this paper.

SVO and the educational support structure in the Netherlands

The Netherlands have a rather unique educational support structure consisting of a) three national innovation centres; b) three national services: research (SVO), curriculum development (SLO), and test development (CITO); c) more than 60 school counselling centres spread across the country; and d) a series of support centres for working young people. This support structure is seen as the nation's infrastructural provision for educational policy and practice in all its stages. Recently these provisions have been firmly founded in a special Bill, thus providing a solid institutionalized situation in which each organization has its set of roles to play.

The Institute for Educational Research SVO (founded in 1965) can best be compared with a national Science Council on the one hand, and with a research contracting agency on the other. The leading principle is that of the customer - contractor. Main customers are the nation's fout School Councils which represent the school practice, and the national government. Both parties are each entitled to 40% of SVO's annual budget of approx. Dfls. 21 million (approx. US$ 10 million). 20% is used for research on SVO's (read: research community's) own initiative, and has a more theory development orientation.
Most policy and practice oriented research is carried out by five university based educational research institutes. About 250 full time professionals find employment in SVO's educational research industry, excluding supporting staff. The national share of educational research channelled via SVO is about 75%. The remaining 25% is carried out by universities for their own policy and practice, by teacher training institutes and by others. However, SVO's mission is a.o. to coordinate all educational research.

Decision-making takes place by SVO's Board of Directors in which all parties are represented: school practice, government and the research community. It is explicitly stated that it is SVO's responsibility to establish research programmes for policy and practice oriented research. Moreover, SVO supports national Research Working Parties for the advancement of educational theory (OTG's after their Dutch initials). Problem areas are themes like: motivation, the application and dissemination of innovations, teaching-learning processes, etc.

Legislation prescribes that SVO is responsible for all that is needed to enhance the useability of research. And it is against this background that, sofar, research programming has received so much attention.

Educational research programming: short history

The fast and considerable increase in educational research in the mid-seventies raised problems of coordination and quality control. Moreover, governmental review committees for educational research and for the social sciences as a whole, exercised a strong influence on debates on relevance for policy of applied research in particular. In response to this internal and external pressure, SVO published a document called "Programming educational research" (1976. English version published in 1978). Its major principles are still valid; it was Europe's first attempt
in realizing national educational research programmes for policy and practice, In SVO's view research programming tasks can best be carried out by an agency which has a relatively independent position in between the users and producers of scientific knowledge. Consequently the broker's role and jargon entered the research enterprise. Moreover, SVO argues that optimal benefits in terms of rational support and evaluation of educational policy and practice will only ultimately be accrued from stimulating a vigorous growth of the educational sciences themselves, while explicit attention is given to attempts to develop deeper understanding and more effective cooperation between education policy and practice on the one hand and research on the other.
At the moment of writing, SVO is preparing its fifth annual research programme. The ambition is that there is a continuing accumulation of knowledge per so called "programme-line" and that there is a similar cohesion across these programme-lines, which basically reflect the sector categories of education used by the customers (policy and practice), e.g. primary and secondary education, etc. A complete list is provided below.

SVO's research programmes for educational policy and practice

The activities carried out under the heading "programming" are diverse and vary to some extent per programma-line. Programming is seen to be a social, intermediary process between demand and supply of policy and practice oriented research, and aims at optimalizing the problem identification on the demand side, the quality of research performance on the supply side, and an optimal matching of these two.
Experience shows that programming is not just a passive and objective "translation" of research needs into research proposals. On the contrary, it appears to be a dynamic process, aiming at problem articulation, modification and priority setting as far as the research component of

policy or practice is concerned. Further down it will be made clear how these programming activities take shap and by whom they are carried out. Here we want to stress that SVO tries to coordinate and interrelate the diverse programmes in such a way that research problems stemming from policy and practice circles are embedded in a more theory oriented context. In practice this effort does not always have success and appears to be very difficult.
Both policy and practice circles (the demand side), as well as the research community (the supply side) had to get accustomed to SVO's intermediary role. Acceptance of SVO's role and expertise in programming came slowly. A continuous struggle for competence ultimately resulted in a situation that the roles are clearly defined and acknowledged. However, research programming is far from perfect. Many lessons have been learned, but not many new insights in utilization matters have been transformed into improved programming activities.

The operational definition of a research programme used from 1976 onwards has not changed much: It is a more or less detailed set of interrelated research topics and priorities in the form of a plan of action. This includes: topics and priorities in the form of a plan of action. This includes:

- a rough elaboration of research areas or aspects thereof in the form of project outlines;
- an indication of the linkage or functional ties between those project outlines;
- a rough estimate of the duration of the outlined projects;
- an inventory of necessary and available manpower and expertise;
- an estimate of needed funds;
- a description of the organizational settings (research institutes; professional networks and cooperation forms) within which the programme will be carried out, including the policy or practice context (= customers) of each project.

In 1983 SVO decided to establish a series of research programmes parallelling the plans for innovation of the existing innovatory programs of government and educational support agencies. These were innovation and renewal of:

1 Primary education
2 Special education
3 Secondary education: lower level
4 Secondary education: upper level
5 Post secondary education: Teacher training
6 Adult education/life-long education

Furthermore support in implementing and preparing

7 The National Priority Policy "Emancipation" in the educational sector
8 A coherent National Priority Policy for "Minorities" in the educational sector
9 A policy for the improvement of the interrelations between education and the labour market
10 Teaching and learning about and with Information Technology (computers in education)

In 1984 two more programmes (also called "programme lines") were added. These deal with educational infrastructural provisions:

11 Improvement of the educational support system
12 Legislative and administrative aspects of education

Finally, another programme was added in 1986:

13 Economical aspects of education

Researchers as well as their clients from policy and practice circles tacitly acknowledged the assumption underlying the programme identification pictured above: Research topic identification would be more relevant for policy and practice when articulation and clarification of problems would take place within the (policy or practice) frame of reference of the user, the customer. However, SVO is inclined to believe at this stage that a more fruitful alternative is possible and preferable. Programmes and their constituing research proposals may have to be formulated from a much more theoretical point of departure. In this way accumulation of knowledge and a better understanding of educational problems might occur.

Programming steps

The following steps are undertaken to establish a research programme, or to update the existing research programmes on a yearly basis:

1. Inventory of research needs:
   Annually, all major institutions in educational policy and practice are invited to describe their needs for needs for research. Such descriptions have to include:
   - The actual policy or practice problem which constitute the context of their need for research.
   - The questions which should be answered by the proposed research.
   - The date that research outcomes should be available with a view to their potential use, and an indication of the ways the potential plans make use of the results when they have become available.

2. Problem survey:
   This step constitutes the heart of the programming matter. One or more experts are invited to carry out a so called "problem-survey" (in Dutch: probleemverkenning) while their work is being supported and coordinated with that of other surveyors by SVO bureau staff. Such surveys diverge in terms of duration, methods and depth, but they all include:
   A. Analysis of the existing and foreseen policy and practice of customers. Mostly this includes interviews with key figures and with those most directly involved or affected. (We note that the concept of "final user" of the research outcomes would improve the quality of this phase).
   B. Indication of the scientific state-of-the-art in the area under scrutiny, and a rough sketch of the contribution which can be expected from research viz a viz the solution of the policy or practice problems raised. Mostly this step includes a survey of the (international) literature in Dutch, English, and (to a much lesser degree) in German and French.
   E. Confrontation of the outcomes of policy analyses (A), with judgments on the scientific feasibility and fruitfulness (B) of research proposals, leading to provisional assessments of the proposals put forward during the first (inventory) stage, and their alternatives already put forward by the surveyor. Such an assessment contains judgments in terms of relevance, scientific backing and feasibility and appropriateness of research problem.

D. Often, negotiations with potential clients take place to arrive at a final set of research problems, acceptable to both potential clients and SVO (read: the scientific community).

E. A report is drawn up, containing the results of all previous steps undertaken, and a description of the activities carried out. This report is a public document, often published in one of SVO's book series, thus enabling potential clients, the public as well as the SVO Board to check on quality and legitimacy of the research proposals themselves.

3. Drawing-up of SVO research programme documents:
The SVO bureau selects a series of proposals for inclusion in the research programme for a particular year, predominantly on basis of financial and other pragmatic criteria, e.g. the forseen availability of the required expertise and the links which can be established to other proposals or projects which are already being carried out.
The SVO Board (representing researchers and customers from policy and practice) approves or amends the provisional long-term and year-programmes, and explicitly deals with the question whether public funds should be allocated or not.

The actual research work can start after the three steps summarized above. However, the starting-up of projects, and then their monitoring with a view to accordance with the programme concerned, are -- for pragmatic reasons -- considered parts of the programming enterprise. Consecutively we distinguish the following steps:

4. Research contracting:
SVO invites institutes to hand in their concrete research plans based on each sketch included in the research programme. Such tenders include an estimate of cost and are using a standard format.
Independent review committees assess the plans and the SVO bureau adds its findings concerning a.o. the proposed budget. The Board decides which rivalling plan will be accepted for funding. Then a research contract is drawn up betwee SVO and the institute concerned.

5. Execution and monitoring:
Most projects last 2 to 3 years. During the execution, progress is monitored by SVO on a quarterly basis. However, SVO did not yet develop clear programme evaluation mechanisms.
Dissemination preparations are made some months before the final report will become available. Contacts between researchers and intended users do occur, but are not frquent, nor have they been planned.
Several final reports will be assessed in order to verify their quality, the match between research problem and the actual research steps undertaken, and other issues. These assessments have a feedback function and are hulpful for dissemination decisions.

PART THREE: DILEMMAS AND CONCERNS

The programming steps described before clearly demonstrate that most communication betwee clients from policy and practice on the one hand, and research on the other takes place during the problem survey phase. However, the researchers who will actually carry out the projects themselves are not yet identified. The problem surveyors are the clients' counterparts. They have been chosen for this task on grounds of their expertise in a particular problem area, and on grounds of proven skills in dealing with policy and practice circles.
Improvements of skills of the latter kind amongst researchers who do not have problem survey assignments do not easily occur this way. Special training programmes for policy researchers are being developed at the moment to counter this problem. However, learning opportunities for the clients who are expected to be committeed to their own research problems, do not receive any consideration. Dialogue with researchers is scarce and scanty.

Another concern is related wo what has been said in the paragraph on utilization and organizational setting: As yet, there is no systematic way of paying attention to the design, type and oher characteristics of policy oriented research in relation to the three essential characteristics of the organization which will use the research outcomes. Much work on the study of dissemination for instrumental and for conceptual use still have to be undertaken. Dissemination is an important activity of SVO; considerable sums of money are spent in this context and remarkable publication forms have been developed, e.g. a monthly research magazine for practitioners with 14,000 subscribers; popular brochures written in a straightforward style, video presentations etc. However, all these efforts have in common the shortcoming that they are not created with a clear customer and his problem in mind.

A prob.em completely ignored sofar, is the question how policy research can contribute more effectively during the different stages of the policy-making work flow. Most likely, new research is not always the most appropriate contribution. Synthesizing state-of-the-art reviews, consultancies may have more effective impact in many circumstances. The issue of theory development while trying to accommodate diverse and unrelated policy problems is a theme which deserves serious, international attention. The customer-contractor principle applied in policy research may endanger the source for effective policy research itself: Accumulation of knowledge and theory development should go hand in hand with research for policy (and practice). The possible dangers inherent to the customer-contractor principle become more threatening wher there is a trend of centralization and control of research by central governments -- a trend which has been recognised before.

Related to the previous concern, is the question whether and to waht extent research should include topics which are fashionable but not necessarily relevant for policy or theory from a scientific point of view. Financial strings seem to determine the answer too many times.

Another, very serious constraint for further development of the educational sciences and theory is the fact that -- in educational

research circles -- relatively little attention is given to international cooperation and exchange. Economical and social developments, on the contrary, do not stop at the national borders. Technological and social changes have an international dimension and policy formation likewise. It is amazing that -- while educational policies increasingly reflect international cooperation and influences -- educational research provisions seem to lock themselves up between national borders. It is to be hoped and wished that the stimulating and coordinating work of the Council of Europe in this field may find a stronger hearing. The Council's Section for Educational Research has proven to be able to initiate and stimulate successfully cooperation between research and policy-makers. This work should be adopted and supported by all who want to make serious work of research for educational policy and practice.

A more daring and effective research policy instrument would be the establishment of a EUROPEAN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATION, affiliated to the Council of Europe. Such a platform for cooperation and research programming could perform an important impetus to theory development while optimalizing utilization of policy and practice oriented educational research in the member states.

NOTES

1. John Nisbet notes that "increasing centralization and control" is a theme that emerged in many chapters of the World Yearbook of Education 1985. Another interesting theme is the observation that new paradigmas for research reflect changing views on the nature of research and its contribution to policy and practice in education. John Nisbet and Stanley Nisbet, eds. (1985), World Yearbook of Education 1985: Research, Policy and Practice. Kogan Page: London.

2. D.B.P. Kallen, G.B. Kosse et al. eds (1982), Social Science Research and Public Policy-making: A Re-appraisal. NEFR-Nelson: Windsor.

3. The utilization movement's quarterly Knowledge: Creation, Diffusion, Utilization (Sage Publications) illustrates the attention given to this topic. Special attention is drawn to the December 1986 issue which contains a Special Section " Knowledge Utilization and Planned Change - Essays in memory of Howard R. Davis". Issues like enlightenment, impact on decisions and ligitimation, congenial research environments, etc. are dealt with.

4. Eric Hoyle (1985), Educational Research: dissemination, participation, negotiation. In World Yearbook of Education 1985; see note 1 (page 206).

5. Michael Timpane, former director of the National Institute of Education (NIE), USA, set out the dissemination policy of the American National Council on Educational Research (NCER) which in 1980 promulgated its first explicit policy on the dissemination of the NIE. It is striking that here too a special note is made of the fact that professional development strategies (either pre-service or in-service) as vehicles for disseminating knowledge to improve practice and policy-making has been neglected.
See p 271-287 in the source mentioned in note 2.

6. Douglas E. Mitchell (1985, p 25) reports that the American National Research Council uses a classification scheme for knowledge production and application activities consisting of 7 clusters: 1) research, 2) demonstrations for policy formation, 3) programme evaluation, 4) general purpose statistics, 5) demonstrations for policy implementation, 6) development of materials, and 7) dissemination.
In the context of this paper on utilization of educational research, it should be stressed that clusters 2 and 5 appear to be neglected in educational R&D circles. More study on these topics is recommended.
Source: Douglas E. Mitchell (1985), Research Impact on Educational Policy and Practice in the USA. In: World Yearbook of Education 1985 (see note 1).

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